

The law, made effective 13 July 1996, contains 33 articles detailing environmental provisions. It delegates the authority to enforce the new law to Bahrain's environmental protection agency, and states that the agency should take the necessary steps to protect the environment. The law also states that a director general is to be appointed by the emir of Bahrain to oversee the environmental regulations.

Among the provisions is the establishment of a new facility to be a laboratory for the environment. The law also calls for an environmental education system and the development of programs to train people to work in environmental affairs. In addition, the law mandates a survey of environmental conditions in Bahrain and the development of a program to solve environmental problems. The law suggests that the environmental protection agency look at existing international research, regulations, and agreements in developing programs and regulations for Bahrain.

The law states that the environmental protection agency must work with other government agencies to set standards to protect the environment and human health in areas such as the use of machinery, the use of pesticides, construction, and the production and use of hazardous materials. It also stresses the importance of worker safety; companies must obtain permission from the environmental protection agency to use hazardous materials and, in workplaces where such materials are used, a list of the materials must be posted. In addition, industries must properly treat waste, and projects must be assessed for environmental impacts.

Under the law, industries that violate the law may be imprisoned and fined an amount not to exceed 50,000 dinar (about \$100,000). In addition, violators can be shut down until they comply with regulations.

Novel Estrogen Receptor Discovered

Jan-Ake Gustafsson of the Karolinska Institute in Sweden dropped a bomb on attendees at a conference earlier this year in Lake Tahoe when he announced the discovery of a novel estrogen receptor in the rat prostate and ovary. Gustafsson was scheduled to speak on a different topic, but chose instead to give his audience a sneak preview of the unexpected findings uncovered by his research group in Sweden. Prior to the recent discovery, scientists believed there was only one estrogen receptor, and only one gene for that receptor.

Estrogen receptors belong to the family of nuclear receptors that are ligand-activated transcription factors. Hormones and other

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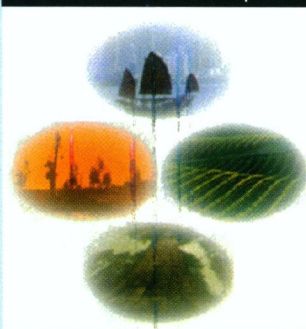
Joining the Great Asia Debate

Throughout Asia and the Pacific, countries eager to realize the high standard of living enjoyed in countries like Singapore and Taiwan are scurrying to put together the manufacturing and trade bases necessary for a profitable existence in the modern world. Policy experts in Asia, however, are beginning to wonder what price these countries are willing to pay for development. Unprecedented environmental degradation has been seen recently in parts of Southeast Asia, and many worry that in their quest for wealth, Asian countries will sacrifice their natural resources. "The debate over linkage between trade and the environment continues unabated," writes Bunn Nagara of the Malaysian Institute of Strategic and International Studies, a government think-tank. "One consequence seemed only inevitable: no multi-lateral [environmental] regulatory code exists, or appears likely to emerge in the foreseeable future. Neither is there agreement that there [should] be such a code impinging on trade."

As development in the nations of Southeast Asia moves forward, the Nautilus Institute, a policy-oriented research and consulting group based in Berkeley, California, is making an effort to facilitate international discussion and cooperation on issues relating to the environment and sustainable development. The centerpiece of this effort is the Asia-Pacific Environment Network, known as APRENet. Located on the World Wide Web at <http://www.nautilus.org/aprenet/index.html>, APRENet provides the latest information and reports on the Asian environment and a forum for users to participate in ongoing debates over policies for Asia's future. APRENet resources include electronic bulletin boards, an on-line library, and links to related material.

Users are required to register for certain APRENet services by following the link on the APRENet homepage. They can then decide in which of APRENet's three main discussion groups they would like to participate. Separate electronic mail networks are maintained for issues concerning the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC), the development of the Mekong Region of Southeast Asia, and the development of the area surrounding the Tumen River (which runs along the border of China and North Korea). At present, however, only the APEC network is fully functional; the Mekong Region network is nearly

Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation



complete, and the Tumen River network is still in development. Registering to participate in these networks, called Virtual Policy Forums, allows users to receive biweekly news reports and op-ed pieces by electronic mail and to post their own insights and opinions for other users to read.

Even without registering, however, users who visit the APRENet homepage can access a variety of information. The APRENet electronic library, for example, contains over 75 documents, reports, speeches, and other on-line resources related to environmental issues in the Asia-Pacific region. In addition, there are sections on APEC, the Mekong area, and the Tumen River area in the library, as well as an extensive list of

links to sites maintained by APEC.

Additional information on APEC, as well as another way to access the APEC Virtual Policy Forum, can be found through the APEC Environment Monitor link on the APRENet homepage. Here, users will find a calendar of APEC meetings and seminars, links to related sites, facts on APEC, and an APEC database (though these last two resources are still under construction). Users can also follow the FOCUS on APEC link on the APRENet homepage to the FOCUS on the Global South homepage. FOCUS on the Global South is a sister network to APRENet that is maintained in Thailand and also collects and distributes information on APEC and other topics related to sustainable development.

The Nautilus homepage link offers information on Asian development outside the realm of APRENet, including links to networks focusing on peace and security, energy, and the environment in Northeast Asia.